



# Like Father

## THE TRADITION OF LAW PRACTICE RUNS DEEP IN THE PINO FAMILY

At Jim Pino & Associates, serving the legal needs of the community is a long-standing family tradition. Jim Pino, a third-generation attorney, opened his own general practice law firm in Pelham in 1976 after he received his degree from Cumberland Law School at Samford University. Raised in a family of attorneys, it made sense for Jim to choose that path as well. More than 35 years later, Jim is one of the most highly respected law professionals in the area today. In 2007, his oldest son, Jeff, received his Bar Certification, joined his father's practice, and became the fourth generation to practice law in the Pino family.

"Growing up in a family of lawyers, I got a lot of practice arguing," Jeff recalled. He said that his grandfather was a lifelong prosecutor in New York City, as well as a law professor at New York Law School. His great-grandfather emigrated from Italy when he was nine years old. He learned English and became an immigration lawyer for Italian families in New York. The Pino family boasts four consecutive generations of legal professionals, but Jeff said the tradition goes back even further. "Our family coat of arms shows lawyers and judges in our family all the way back to 1650." The Pino family's distinguished history of legal experience and expertise exhibits a dedication to the profession that runs deeper than your average commitment to a job. In the Pino family, seeking justice is more than just a career; it is a way of life.

## A REPUTATION TO DEFEND

Excellence in law, not simply the practice of it, is part of their family legacy. Just five years after starting his practice, Jim Pino received his first review by Martindale-Hubbell® PEER REVIEW RATINGS™ and was awarded the highest rating possible, AV Preeminent. According to Martindale.com, the reviews are "an objective indicator of a lawyer's high ethical standards and professional ability, generated from evaluations of lawyers by other members of the bar and the judiciary in the United States and Canada." When a lawyer is reviewed, he or she must first meet criteria to be rated "Very High" in the General Ethical Standards portion. Once they meet the first set of standards, they can then be rated according to their legal ability. To be given a final rating, each law professional is scored in five areas: legal knowledge, analytical capabilities, judgment, communication ability, and legal experience. "AV Preeminent is a significant rating accomplishment - a testament to the fact that a lawyer's peers rank him or her at the highest level of professional excellence," asserts the site.

Jim Pino & Associates has retained that same rating throughout its existence as a private practice law firm. Over the years, Jim Pino has gained a thorough knowledge of legal proceedings and has argued an array of cases for his clients. "He knows the local court system as well as anybody," Jeff pointed out, which is a major benefit to his clients. The firm is a general practice with an emphasis in divorce and family law; however, they have no shortage of experience in providing a wide array of other legal services, including criminal law, juvenile cases, personal injury, social security, home warranty and construction, estate planning and probate, and civil litigation. The Pino's legal expertise is extensive, not

# Like Son

by Laura Smyer



only because of the decades spent fighting for clients in the courtroom, but from time spent in various other legal positions as well. Jim is a two-time Shelby County Bar Association President and current member, while Jeff is in the midst of his first term as President of the association. Jim is also a member of the Birmingham Bar Association and has served as a municipal judge, administrative law judge, city prosecutor, and special assistant to the Alabama Attorney General. In 1981, Jim was first admitted to the U.S. Court of Appeals, and received admittance to the U.S. Supreme Court the following year.

## BEYOND THE LAW

Horror stories about lawyers who don't care about the people they represent abound. This can make choosing an attorney a daunting task, particularly when you aren't sure whom to trust. With a resume like Jim Pino & Associates can provide, one can feel safe entrusting his or her legal matter to the firm. "We can handle just about any type of case," said Jeff. And if Jim Pino & Associates cannot provide proper counsel for a case, he added they will gladly recommend someone who can. When seeking legal consultation, you want a highly-respected, skilled professional who also possesses a sincere compassion for his clients. "Our clients are not just another file in the drawer," Jim explained. "They're real people." Jim Pino strives to build relationships with the people he represents, seeking to make his clients feel comfortable while he aggressively fights for their best interests. "One advantage a small, family-oriented firm has over a larger one is that you get personal attention," he added. "We listen to what our clients have to say so we can understand their needs."

Bonnie Morris, a legal assistant with Pino & Associates for the last three years, attested to the difference in the way she sees clients treated. "I have worked at other firms in the past," she said, "and I would constantly get calls from upset clients saying 'He or she never called me back.' I don't get those here." Jim stated, "Because we're a family-oriented firm, we try to carry that same attitude into our dealings with clients."

Talk to any of the three legal assistants and they will tell you the same thing: I love working for Jim Pino & Associates. Kitty Whitworth first began working for Jim when she just 19 years old. After spending the next few years working for different legal firms, she came back and has enjoyed the last 16 years reunited with Jim Pino. Kitty's sister Vickie even followed her lead and has been with the firm for a total of five years now. "I drive 70 miles round-trip from Tuscaloosa County everyday because I like the people and environment here so much," Bonnie continued.

"It's like a family around here," Jeff affirmed, even though for him it actually is, at least when his father is in the office. But Jeff did not simply mean between himself and his father. "On occasion, Bonnie has had to bring her daughter to the office. We're just family-oriented and realize that sometimes life's not perfect." Jim and Jeff also find practicing law together to be a great thing for them. "What's more important than law is that I just enjoy working with my dad," Jeff said. "Besides my first year of college, I have held a job since I was 15 years old, in many different industries. I discovered early on that I wanted to work for myself one day, seeing the way he did it. There's nobody else in the world I would rather work for." Jim feels the same way. "Probably the most satisfying aspect of my career has been to be able to mentor my son and watch him develop into a fine lawyer." **{SC}**